

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

During the school year children from low-income homes typically receive at least one-third of the nutrients they consume each day from school lunch. Unfortunately, for many children school vacation represents a hungry time because school lunch is no longer available.

As a result, emergency food providers often report an increase in requests during the summer months. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is designed to fill this gap. Among the organizations providing this service are Boy and Girl Scout Troops, YWCAs and YMCAs, school districts, community action agencies, churches, camping associations, 4-H Clubs, food banks, and municipal agencies. Feeding sites include local school buildings, rec centers and parks. One Beaver County site is a school bus turned into a mobile cafeteria for summer food to rural children.

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|  <p>Who can provide the service?</p> | <p>Local sponsors provide summer meals. School districts, units of local government, camps, and private nonprofit organizations are eligible to be sponsors. (School districts can also apply to the PA Department of Education for a waiver to serve summer meals throughout the community using the National School Lunch Program.)</p> <p>Some sponsors prepare and distribute the meals, while others contract out meal preparation to vendors such as schools or private food services. Some non-profits operate a summer feeding site under the umbrella of another sponsoring organization that is responsible for finances and paperwork. To be a summer food sponsor, an organization must be certified by PDE.</p> |
|  <p>How is it financed?</p> | <p>SFSP is an uncapped federal entitlement program administered by PDE. During 2004, Pennsylvania received \$12 million to cover the meal costs of approximately 121,742 children from June through August. To date, no Pennsylvania dollars have been invested in the program.</p> |
|  <p>Who can receive this service?</p> | <p>An "open site" is located in an urban attendance area where at least 50 percent (or a rural area where at least 40 percent) of the children are eligible for free or reduced price school lunches. At such a feeding site, all children 18 and younger can receive free meals without documenting a child's family income. At an "enrolled site", the area need not be low-income, but at least 50 percent of the enrolled children must have family incomes of less than 185 percent of poverty, and only enrolled children may receive the free meals. At a residential camp, children who are not eligible for free or reduced price school meals may be charged for their meals.</p> |
|  <p>What is provided?</p> | <p>The meal pattern can be a breakfast and a lunch; a breakfast, lunch and a snack; or a supper and a snack. At residential camps children can receive up to three meals a day. PDE reimburses sponsors according to set rates or at a sponsor's actual costs, whichever is lower. Rates for operating costs are: \$1.42 per breakfast; \$2.48 per lunch and supper; and \$0.58 per snack. Rates for administrative costs are approximately \$0.14 per breakfast, \$0.26 per lunch or supper, and \$0.07 per snack (exact rates depend on location and on whether meals are vended or prepared by the sponsor).</p> |
|  <p>Contact</p> | <p>More information about the SFSP is available by calling Susan Still at PDE (1-800-331-0129). Information about whether a geographic area qualifies as an "open enrollment site" is available from your local school district, PA Hunger Action or from PDE.</p> |
|  <p>Suggestions for advocacy</p> | <p>Are summer meals available in your area? If not, talk to school or community leaders and ask them to inquire about becoming a SFSP sponsor. School districts are particularly well-suited for becoming sponsors because of familiarity with school lunch and breakfast.</p> |